

Prabuddha Bharata

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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वराणिबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I, iii. 4

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

—Swami Vivekananda.

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CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

PART II.—IX.

[Place—*Belur Math.* Year—*Beginning of 1899.*

Subject—*Meeting of Nag Mahasaya with Swamiji—each has a high opinion of the other.*]

The disciple has to-day come to the Math with Nag Mahasaya in company.

Swamiji to Nag Mahasaya (saluting him).— Are you well!

Nag Mahasaya.— I have come to-day to visit you. Glory to Sankara! Sankara! I am blessed to-day verily with the sight of Siva.

Saying these words, Nag Mahasaya out of reverence stood with joined hands before him.

Swamiji.— How is your health?

Nag Mahasaya.— Why are you asking about this trifling body—the cage of flesh and bones? Verily I am blessed to-day by seeing you.

Saying these words, Nag Mahasaya prostrated before Swamiji.

Swamiji (lifting him up). Why are you doing that to me?

Nag Mahasaya.— I see with my inner eye—to-day I am blessed with the vision of Shiva Himself. Glory to Ramakrishna!

Swamiji (addressing the disciple).—Do you see? How real Bhakti transforms human nature! Nag Mahasaya has lost himself in the Divine, his body-consciousness has vanished altogether. (To Swami Premananda)—get some *Prasad* (sacramental food) for Nag Mahasaya.

Nag Mahasaya.— *Prasad!* (To Swamiji with folded hands). By seeing you all my earthly hunger has vanished.

The Brahmacharins and Sannyasins of the Math were studying the Upanishads. Swamiji addressing them said, "To-day a

great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna has come amongst us. Let your study be stopped to-day in honour of Nag Mahasaya's holy visit to the Math. So everyone closed his book and sat in a circle round Nag Mahasaya; Swamiji also sat in front of him.

Swamiji (addressing all)—Do you see? Look at Nag Mahasaya; he is a householder; yet he has no knowledge of the mundane world; he always lives lost in Divine consciousness. (To Nag Mahasaya)—Tell us and these Brahmacharins, something about Sri Ramakrishna.

Nag Mahasaya.—What do you say, Sir? What shall I say? I have come to see you; the hero, the helper in the *lila* of Sri Ramakrishna. Now will people appreciate the message and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Glory to Him!

Swamiji.—You have really appreciated and understood Sri Ramakrishna. We are spent in useless search and wanderings.

Nag Mahasaya.—What do you say, Sir? You are the penumbra of the umbra of Ramakrishna ideal—the obverse and reverse of the same coin. Those who have eyes, let them see.

Swamiji.—These establishments of Maths and Ashramas, are these rightly conceived and in the right direction?

Nag Mahasaya.—I am an insignificant being, what do I understand? Whatever you do, I know for a certainty will conduce to the well-being of the world—yes to the good of the world.

Many out of reverence began to take the dust of Nag Mahasaya's feet from which act of deference shown to him Nag Mahasaya shrunk with delicacy became very agitated in mind. Swamiji addressing all said: Don't act so as to cause pain to Nag Mahasaya; he feels uncomfort-

able; hearing which everybody desisted.

Swamiji.—Do come and stay at the Math. Seeing you, the boys of the Math will learn.

Nag Mahasaya.—I once asked Sri Ramakrishna about that, to which he replied, "Stay in the life of the householder," therefore I am staying in the householder's life. Seeing you occasionally, I feel myself blessed.

Swamiji.—I will once go to your part of the country.

Nag Mahasaya, mad with joy, said, "Shall such a day dawn? My country will be made holy by your visit, like Kasi. Shall I be so fortunate as to be blessed by your visit?"

Swamiji.—I have the desire. Now if "Mother" takes me.

Nag Mahasaya.—Who will understand you? Unless the inner divine sight opens, nobody can understand you. Only Sri Ramakrishna understood you; all else put faith in his words and believe, none has understood you really.

Swamiji.—Now my one desire is, to rouse the country—the hero who is as if lying in slumber losing faith in his eternal power like one inert, without any response. If I can rouse it in the spirit of the Eternal Religion, then shall I know, Sri Ramakrishna's advent and our birth is fruitful. That is the one desire in my heart; salvation, Mukti appears of no consequence to me. Give me your blessings, that success may attend.

Nag Mahasaya.—The blessings of Sri Ramakrishna! Who can turn the course of your will?—none that I see. Whatever you will—that shall come to pass.

Swamiji.—Nothing comes to pass—without His will behind it.

Nag Mahasaya.—Your will and His

have become one. Whatever is your will is His. Glory to Him !

Swamiji.— To work, one requires a strong body; since coming to this country, my body is not in health; in other countries (Europe and America) I was in very good health.

Nag Mahasaya.— In taking embodied existence, Sri Ramakrishna used to say— "One has to pay tax for inhabiting the body." Disease and sorrow are the taxes. But your body is a box of gold *mohurs*. Very great care has to be taken of it. Who will do? Who will understand? Only Sri Ramakrishna understood. Glory to Ramakrishna !

Swamiji.— They at the Math keep me in great care.

Nag Mahasaya.— Those who are taking care, it will be to their good whether they understand it or not. If there is slackness in taking care of your body, then it will fall off.

Swamiji.— Nag Mahasaya, I do not fully understand whether what I am doing is right or not. At times a great inclination comes in a certain direction and I work according to that, whether it is for good or evil, I cannot understand.

Nag Mahasaya.— Sri Ramakrishna said, "The treasure is now locked"—therefore he does not let you know fully. The moment you know it, your play of human life will be at an end.

Swamiji was pondering something with eyes fixed. Then Swami Premananda brought some *Prasad* and gave it to Nag Mahasaya and others. Nag Mahasaya holding the *Prasad* in the hands touched his head and began to dance with "Glory to Ramakrishna" on his lips. Every body was struck with wonder seeing his ecstatic condition. After partak-

ing of the *Prasad*, everybody dispersed and began to walk about in the garden. Swamiji with a spade in hand was slowly digging the ground in front of the pond. Nag Mahasaya, seeing it, held him by the hand and said, "When we are present, why do you do that?" Swamiji leaving the spade walked about the garden talking the while, and began to narrate to a disciple, "After Sri Ramakrishna's passing away we heard one day that Nag Mahasaya was lying in fast in his humble tiled lodgings in Calcutta. Myself, brother Hari, and another went together and appeared at Nag Mahasaya's cottage. Seeing us he rose, leaving his bed. We said, "We shall take *bhikshá* (food) to-day here." At once Nag Mahasaya brought rice, cooking pot and fuel from the bazar and set to cooking. We thought that we would eat and make Nag Mahasaya also eat. Cooking over, he gave the food to us; we set apart something for Nag Mahasaya, and then sat down to eat. After this, we requested Nag Mahasaya to take food; he at once broke the pot of rice and striking his forehead began to say: "The body in which God has not been realised, shall I give food to it?" Seeing this we were struck with amazement. Later, after much request and entreaties, we induced him to take some food and then returned.

Swamiji.— Will Nag Mahasaya stay in the Math to-day.

Disciple.— No, he has some work; he has to return to-day.

Swamiji.— Then look for a boat. It is already growing dark in the evening.

When the boat came, disciple and Nag Mahasaya after saluting Swamiji boarded the boat and started for Calcutta.

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

THE ideal of Renunciation which forms the bed-rock of all systems of religion now comes in for a good deal of disparaging criticism at the hands of thinkers and writers of the modern age as a harmful ideal, which tends to the negation of life in all the richness and variety of its social, national life, which the modern man is so desirous of enriching and intensifying. It is said to diminish the force of human action or his intensity of interest in human life or achievement. It is said to encourage a pallid and starved outlook feeding on the sorrows of life, and, as a sign of the defeat of human soul in contest with the life-forces and conditions, to suggest a withdrawal and retreat from it as the only real haven of safety, the final resting place and solution of human destiny.

The latest unkindest cut on the ideals of renunciation has come from Lala Lajpat Rai in an article in the "Modern Review." The writer bewails the strong tendency towards renunciation in all systems of the world's religion, the strong tincture of it in the Sanskrit scriptures and its widespread prevalence in the psychology of the Indian people. Renunciation has been, according to the writer, the great stumbling block in the path of human progress; Europe has made improvements in human life by disregarding the gospel of renunciation of Christianity, and for the progress of Indian humanity he advocates a change in the psychology of our people in respect to its strong bias towards renunciation and to preach to them the gospel of life, "of health, wealth, and prosperity."

Now, in order to judge how far and to what extent the ideal of renunciation has been a mistaken ideal, deluding humanity with a false gospel of life, we must demand of the writer, an enunciation of what he conceives life to be and what is its destined goal. The writer is explicit to state in contraposition to the ideal of religion, that "real salvation lies in freedom from misery, poverty, disease, ignorance, slavery of every kind, in this life now and here for ourselves and hereafter for our successors." The human horizon confined within this life which refuses to look beyond, anyhow to succeed in the struggle of life by pushing out others or groups of other men is seen to be the standard of human excellence and endeavour. No wonder that the ideal of renunciation is found wanting and harmful judged by these standards, for no man who believes in a Soul and eternity much less the great Seers and Sages of humanity who inspired religion will subscribe to it.

Renunciation is the visualisation of a great Truth by the Seers of humanity which is determining the whole course of human progress and evolution, and which man who is really progressing is acting on every minute in his life constituting the motive force in his advancement and success in any direction. We will see that it is not refusing to live, but the will to live fruitfully, most intensely, with the least dissipation of energy subserving all the interests of man. For what is the philosophy back of the ideals of renunciation? The stream of human life flows in two currents described in the two Sanskrit words *Pravritti*

(towards the world and senses) and *Nivritti* (away from the world and senses) and it is the postulate of Vedanta that these two streams or tendencies are co-existent with creation, as represented in the Vedic tradition by the embodiment of the Rishis, Sanaka, Sananda and Sanatkumar, the promulgators and upholders of the *Nivritti marga*, and the *Pravritti marga* upheld by the Rishis Atri, Angiras etc. Both these are *dharma*s or rules of life, one *Pravritti laksana* and the other *Nivritti laksana*; all ordered, moral progress consists in regulating the one tendency by the other, according to the progress and grade of individuals or groups, ultimately to effect a transubstantiation of both *Pravritti* and *Nivritti* in the realisation of *Jnana* or knowledge when the one Truth, the Brahman or Sakti will be established in all actions and objects, and *Pravritti* or *Nivritti*, *Bhoga* or *Tyaga* will lose their significance in ultimate knowledge. So *Nivritti* or Renunciation never seeks to negate action or life, but only to regulate or transform it. The keenness of life, the will to live it, is the most natural desire implanted in the natural man, it is as powerful in the savage as in the civilised, equally in the man of God, only it varies in the complexity and depths of inner living which gives a whole world of changed significance in their respective living. Renunciation does not want to destroy the current of life, for that will be *Tamas*, but only to change the significance of living, into a fuller, deeper life with a stronger flow,

moral turpitude and social chaos, but when pressed to define the amount of such restraint, he can only say "moderately." This is not based on a comprehensive view of human destiny but is a sort of patch-work compromise, when two opposing principles are perpetuated in human conduct, taking little from each without coming to a conclusion as to their ultimate goal. The principle of *Pravritti*, or outgoing activities and life of man is not trusted in itself as it is sought to be curbed by renunciation however "moderately," but the spiritual house is left divided by the dual forces, and no unification of soul is sought after. Religion begins with a dissatisfaction for such patch-work remedy and shows the way to the unification of soul. It does not propose a compromise of *Bhoga* and *Tyaga* (enjoyment and renunciation). Such compromises are based on nebulous thinking and on no clear perception of the ultimate goal and destiny of human life and actions. Religion says that so long as there is *Bhoga* (enjoyment for self) *Tyaga* (renunciation of self) will always remain as a restraining and regulating factor in human life. *Tyaga* will only vanish when the idea of *Bhoga* has vanished, and both are superseded by the vision of knowledge. It admits the dual action of two forces, *Avidya* and *Vidya*, but seeks gradually to control the *Avidya* by *Vidya* till at last the unification is reached, when the life of sense is covered over by the life of spirit, and the play of life becomes an efflorescence of the *Leela* of God.

Even the most out and out positivist and utilitarian will admit some amount of renunciation in human actions for if the natural force of human passions, desires, are not controlled it will lead to vice,

Which is the fuller and deeper life, the life of senses or the life of spirit, the view of life which is confined to this world or the view which looks upon this world as the projection of the life of spirit?

Which constitutes the greater motive-power to action in this life? Renunciation, the first watchword of which is "not I, but thou" is based on non-self, whereas the life of individual in this world moves on the pivot of self. One who builds on the renunciation of sense-vanities, who does not see the sensuous life as itself, but as reflection, however removed, of the life of spirit, will move in a freer, larger and ampler atmosphere and his actions in this life will bear the mark of corresponding largeness, untrammelled by fear of death, uncontaminated by selfishness. As the limits put by sense-life round him melts by the action of spirit, it will produce a correspondent elation of his being, the outlines of his being will be considerably enlarged than the man whose vision is confined within this world and who identifies himself with his body and senses; and consequently greater reaches of patience, fortitude, perseverance will open out before him which will be part of his being and the habitual centre of his activity. Whereas the man whose horizon is confined to this world merely will be hedged round by a thousand considerations of life, fear, sense of difficulty, despair, the great inhibitors of large actions. It was Buddha who did not believe in this world, but in Nirvana, the blissful, who was ready to sacrifice his life in order to save the life of a goat.

The fact is that Hinduism or Vedanta of all religions does not standardise one code of conduct for people of all grades in a social body. For the householder and Sannyasin and all people there are prescribed different rules according to their station in life. The whole scheme of life is based on renunciation, when by gradually fulfilling his duties in different

grades, he rises to higher and higher levels of renunciation, and each uplift means entry into a wider world and a fuller life. The symbols of his previous stage of life give place to wider symbols, until the apex is reached in Sannyas, when the whole world becomes a symbol of God, and the sense of the Divine becomes the habitual spring and centre of his activity. The life of Sannyasa in which one cuts away from home, family community, and caste is a self-concentrated life in Reality. It is not impoverishment of life but its enrichment, in which the deepest and profoundest energies of human nature are liberated resulting in acts, the effects of which go rolling down the centuries.

The one prominent fact which critics of renunciation fail to see that the life of renunciation does not mean any contraction of life, that it does not lead to abatement of interest in one's Swadharma, or duties according to one's station in life. It is not suppression, but higher direction, it is not the killer of the springs of action, but the inspirer of enlightened action. The senses are not killed in renunciation, but they become more alert and wide awake, because purged of the elements of darkness and inertia due to self-indulgence from ignoble motives, they become suffused with the Sattva element, aflame with intelligence and fit instruments for the performance of large actions.

The object of stimulating secular endeavour in the people of this country, of creating in them a zeal, and interest in life should be attained according to us, not by killing and obscuring the glorious ideal of renunciation round which the whole *sadharma* of the nation has placed such emphasis

and which has become a vital characteristic, but by emphasising the *swadharma* of individual or groups, which has been equally emphasised; and the very force to perform the *swadharma*, with vigour and enlightenment will come from the spirit of renunciation. If the hymns and songs and prayers of the Vivekananda Mission, the Arya Samaj and the Brahma Samaj are "brimful of the spirit of renunciation," breathes of the impermanence of life, its underlying selfishness, they are so advisedly, because true to facts, and they do not presume to nerve men to action by blinding them with a false sort of optimism but place all human action on the adamant foundations of Truth. But these do not nullify or abate the significance of the right performance of *swadharma*, for by the vigorous and enlightened performance of *swadharma* conceived in the right spirit of the renunciation will the progress of the soul in knowledge and truth depend. It discards the false view for the right one, and while advancing the social, communal interests of man, enabling him to sound them to their depths, subverts them to the gradual unfoldment of the life of Spirit, when ultimately the whole world-dream will vanish and God will be in its stead. If the people of this country have during the cycle of depression and torpor through which it is passing have not shown much improvement in the secular concerns of life, and advanced their temporal interests, it is because *swadharma* has decayed and men have gradually come to lead lives concentrated in self, in narrow grooves bereft of the dictates of *swadharma*, "preferring mere living to honourable" and vigorous and fruitful living. And to create in them a zest in life, to make them prize it as real, earnest, precious, and invaluable is to rouse them again in the spirit

of renunciation in the vigorous practice of *swadharma*, as a stepping-stone and the gateway to Mukti, Nirvana and Salvation. Only when the spirit is roused, by envisaging of a Great Ideal by the people, will the blood flow strongly through the veins, will it raise people from the dust and set them carving out their glorious destiny. The preaching of the *swadharma* of individuals will not only cure the ills of life, banish poverty, misery and ignorance from the social and communal life, but the performance of *swadharma* in the spirit of renunciation subordinated to the attainment of the highest salvation or Mukti will prevent the lapsing into those excesses of materialism which a too materialistic and economic view of life is apt to generate, and further will constitute the very stepping stones from which higher view of life and renunciation will be reached and ultimately lead to the attainment of Mukti or Nirvana. The power of renunciation brought to bear on the material plane will work out their material prosperity subordinated to spiritual welfare, made to act on the intellectual, will bring out all the latent richness of thought, will and sentiment and brought to play on the spiritual, will lead to freedom from the world-dream. Physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being are the watchwards of Vedanta.

The scheme of life which has been evolved by the Seers of India, which India during the whole course of its historical evolution has been living is based on the eternal verities of the destiny of man. Its aim is Mukti, its means, the performance of *swadharma* regulated by religion. That is why renunciation forms such a great part in the mental make-up of the people, why the Sanskrit scriptures are so heavily

tinged with these ideals. Not political greatness, nor commercial supremacy is the goal of this scheme of life. But because the ideals of Mukti and renunciation attain such a high level in it, does it fail to emphasise the righteous performance of *swadharma*? Books which are the accredited scriptures of the people are an emphatic enunciation of the *swadharma* of the people, the Bhagavad Gita for example. It is no doubt possible to evoke a sort of intense, feverish activity and interest in this life in people by holding ideals more in line with their self-interest, by appeal to the commoner passions, and material hopes and aspirations of mankind. Nations that have built their existence on political greatness, or commercial supremacy have no doubt displayed much manifestation of power, energy and improvement of life in pursuit of their national end. But have they been the better stayer for that? After a period of vigorous, fitful and in some cases vicious existence, with a temporary deprivation of political liberty or loss of commercial greatness and material prosperity, these nations had nothing to fall back upon to sustain them during periods of depression, and so pined away and vanished into the inane. Whereas civilisations based on spirituality have withstood many a shock of historical forces, have the sustaining power to bear the periodic eclipse of material, economic and political prosperity and during periods of favourable historical circumstances to show signs of rejuvenescent and resurgent national life. Europe by breaking away from the teachings of renunciation of true Christianity, has more and more secularised itself and shown much improvements in the secular concerns of life, but it has also because of that raised a crop of evils in its craze for political

and material prosperity which threatens to disrupt its polity, unless it is mindful to change its course and build on the basis of true religion. European life has been led to this increasing secularisation because of dogmatic Christianity not been wide enough to include all departments of human activity, every step forward in modern science and learning having during the later century been taken in opposition to Christian theology. The result is, European civilisation and Christianity have followed separate courses during the last century and bereft of the spirit of renunciation in Christianity, the civilisation has more and more secularised itself and run to material and political excesses and dangers.

Vedanta on the other hand, and the civilisation based on it, though nowhere do the ideals of renunciation attain such a high level as in it, is yet wide enough to comprehend all phases of human activity, in social, communal and national life at the same time chastening those activities from running to excesses by the governance of a supreme Spiritual end. The "Swadharma" or *Jatidharma* as a means to Mukti or salvation is an integral part of the civilisation. Renunciation in ascending degrees forms the whole warp and woof of this civilisation, as its end is not merely material prosperity in this life or hereafter, but Mukti salvation, and freedom from the world-dream. Let us then beware how we listen to false prophets, who while desiring to advancing the material well-being will upturn the whole character of our civilisation, and fasten upon us a economic and material view of life,—if that is at all possible. Then he tries to essay the impossible, to make the people forget their whole past, to suppress the study and cherishing of the

Sanskrit Scriptures and Epics, tinctured as they are with a high colour of renunciation, inimical to material prosperity, change the whole psychology of the people inherited through countless years and confine their look only to this world by "a pursuit of happiness in this world by the righteous acquisition of health, wealth and knowledge." Writers in this strain are well-meaning, but from our own reading of Indian history and civilisation, we have no hesitation in saying that their line of action is wrong, nay their methods run counter to the whole genius and destiny of the people and therefore bound to be ineffective and inoperative. Their methods, if successful, by replacing our theme of life by a exotic one will not invigorate the national life but stagnate, and ultimately kill it—and a civilisation which is not loyal to its own Dharma will deserve to perish. The path

of glory lies elsewhere in following the life-theme of the people, renunciation and spirituality. If we are true to the genius of our inherited culture and refuse to betray it under glamour of immediate material prosperity to economic and political views of life, not only will the misery, poverty and ignorance of the land be cured by the righteous performance of *swadharma* as means of Mukti, but we will be preserving our characteristic culture and view of life, and build on the basis of that a type of nationality, spiritual, humane, just, with the material subordinated to the spiritual, and bereft of the excesses of political nationalism of conquest and exploitation. On renunciation and service, a fabric of nationality will be built which will not only be an agency of material prosperity, but will be an ark ferrying mankind across the waters of life to Nirvana, the Blissful.

WEAKNESS OR STRENGTH?

WHEN Swami Vivekananda quoted the phrase, "This Atman cannot be attained by the weak," he fully realised the meaning and intention of the words. It was his design, at the moment of speaking, to emphasise one particular aspect of truth. It was, moreover, his desire not only to "make the lion of Vedanta roar" but to arouse that lion to complete consciousness of its power; he wished that power to be put into action for the vivification and regeneration of the India which he so profoundly loved. He knew that no more stupendous mistake could be made by man than that of yielding to apparent weakness. Whenever one says to himself, "I am weak in power or in purse; I have no high standing in the

world; my education has been slender; I cannot lay claim to strength of any kind";—he throws aside his opportunities for working the will of The One, and for helping those of his fellows who are more in need than he.

"The lion-roar of Advaita must resound in every hearth and home . . . Come all of you to my assistance and set yourselves to work." Notice how sagaciously this eloquent monk struck inspiration into his hearer's heart and brain. Notice, also, that he was compelled to strike and strike again before the brain perceived and the heart opened and closed upon his message. His disciple remarked, "Sir, it appeals to me rather to realise that state" (of one-ness with the All)

"through meditation, than make a display of it through action." "That" cries Swamiji, "is but a state of stupefaction. What will be the use of merely remaining like that? Does one feel happy in tasting a good thing all by himself? One should share it with others. We must prove the truth of pure Advaitism in practical life. Sankara left this Advaita philosophy in the hills and forests; while I have come to bring it out of those places and scatter it broadcast before the work-a-day world and society."

How swiftly, how surely, Vivekananda aimed the arrow of his reply. The disciple, keenly earnest as he was, had sought to shelter himself behind the ascetic veil of meditation and contemplation. Swamiji rent the veil imperiously asunder, disclosing a certain undefined selfishness lurking in the disciple's breast.

There is a pertinent passage in the Scripture of the West, "all that a man hath will he give for his life." Like many wise "sayings," this passage is of Eastern origin. It occurs in the Book of Job; history and analysis of him who has been described as the most patient man on record. It is part of a conversation between The Lord on the one hand and Satan the Evil One on the other, and the words in the passage are the words of Satan. The Lord of Evil knew well enough how precious life is to man and how natural it is for him, when in danger of losing life, to pay any price in order to escape death.

Let us read a line or two of the story. There was a day, so the story runs, when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, a perfect and upright man? Still he holdeth fast his integrity, although

thou movedst Me against him to destroy him without cause." And Satan answered the Lord, "All that a man hath will he give up for his life; but put forth thine hand now and touch his bone and his flesh and he will curse thee to thy face." And the Lord said unto Satan, "Behold he is in thine hand; but save his life." So went Satan out and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to his crown. Then said his wife unto him "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die." But he said unto her "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil?" In all this, continues the narrator, did not Job sin with his lips. The holy man's integrity was inviolable because of the invincibility of his faith. Later, when subjected to severer trials, he declared, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." And again "Though worms destroy this body, yet shall I see God." This saint, who, in true accord with the Vedantic philosophy, endured good and evil alike at the will of the Lord, was willing to relinquish all, to renounce all, at his Lord's bidding. In that willingness lay his strength. Wasted by disease, torn by suffering and sorrow, deserted by acquaintances, materially impoverished, his soul stayed secure in its One-ness with the Lord.

The disciple, whose dialogue with Swamiji we are still considering, had not yet arrived at this supreme stage of renunciation. He pleaded for the solitude of meditation and the great Guru, with unerring skill and audacity, bade him throw aside his tendency to solitary self-seeking and enter loyally into the field of action. Vivekananda comprehended the desire frequently manifested by seekers after the Lord to exist only for one's own salvation

and to avoid all the ordinary difficulties and duties which a striver for good has to encounter. Real as the disciple's struggle for religion was, he had not hitherto been able to overcome his admiration for the life of personal salvation. In common with a multitude of other similar enquirers on The Way he beheld the glorious goal ahead, but imagined it could only be attained by mental search. The apt injunction, "Seek, and thou shalt find," signified actual search by movement of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit. Faith, after all, must be proved by deeds rather than by dreams.

We may suppose even that, through the dream, by means of meditation, by the science of contemplation, the disciple acquired perception of One-ness—what then? Swamiji replies and with effective emphasis; "Granted that you attain personal liberation, what matters it to the world? You must liberate the whole universe. Then only will you be established in the eternal truth. You will be established in the bliss of the Infinite, which is limitless like the skies, you will feel the

whole sentient and insentient world as your own self. Then you cannot help treating all with the same kindness as you show towards yourself. This is indeed practical Vedanta."

The West has a like teaching, "No man liveth to himself;" "He that loveth his brother" (i. e. brother man) "abideth in the light"; and "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." One other text we would emphasise as strongly as may be possible; "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Assuredly, then, as Swamiji perceived, it is a veritable sign of weakness if one strives merely for his own salvation, his own attainment; his own realisation. The strength of the lion of the Vedanta shows itself in love of all, in sacrifice for all, in work for all, Prayer is great; but after all, work is greater; for work undertaken for the Lord and for the sons of the Lord, is practical prayer.

ERIC HAMMOND.

PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE IN BROWNING'S POETRY.

BROWNING'S most triumphant, noble and beautiful utterances on the great questions of God and the ultimate life-principle of man have been embodied in "La Sag Siaz," the poem, which has often been compared with the "In Memoriam" of Tennyson. Here death has made Browning essay to answer questions like "does the soul survive the body? Is there God's self? no or yes?" And his faith is

"All we know not,—o'er our heaven again
Cloud closes, until, lo—

Hope the arrowy, just as constant, comes to
pierce its gloom, compelled

By a power and by a purpose which, if no
one else beheld

I behold in life,—so—hope!"

It is in this poem that occurs also the famous conversation between Fancy and Reason, in the course of which almost the whole of Browning's theology and philosophy is succinctly discussed and God, soul, earth, heaven, hell are all in due course substantiated and then the question is, "What else more?" to which reason replies:—

"Nothing! henceforth man's existence bows
to the monition "wait!"

Take the joys and bear the sorrows—neither
with extreme concern!

Living here means nescience simply : 'tis
 next life that helps to learn
 Shut those eyes, next life will open,—stop
 those ears, next life will teach
 Hearing's office,—close those lips, next life
 will give thee powers of speech !
 Or, if action more amuse thee than the
 passive attitude,
 Bravely bustle through thy being, busy thee
 for ill or good.
 Reap this life's success or failure ! soon shall
 things be unperplexed
 And the right and wrong now tangled, lie
 unravelled in the next." (La Sai Siaz).

Thus it is that this great imaginative apologist formulates for us his bright gospel of hope. In him we find not merely deep meditation, speculative intellectualism but also that instinctive grasping at the higher truths which marks his especial characteristic in an age much too overwhelmed with the pale sad cast of thought and the ghastly hard light of materialistic civilisation. May be that in point of vividness of conception, he is somewhat a loser in comparison with Tennyson but that is only due to his more complex attitude and exalted thought so generally bound up with obscurity of expression and indefiniteness of touch. But he is greater than Tennyson, whose ideas are rarely above the commonly accepted sense of things. So Browning would bear the crosses of life confident that victory is sure for him. He would be and he was to the last, as he has asserted in the very last piece of his writing, those most interesting and highly important lines since they furnish the key to the understanding of the whole man :—

"One who never turned his back, but marched
 breast forward
 Never doubted clouds would break,
 Never dreamed though right were worsted,
 wrong should triumph."

"No, at noonday, in the bustle of man's work-time
 Greet the unseen with a cheer !
 Bid him forward, breast and back as either
 should be.
 "Strive and thrive !" cry "Speed, fight on, fare ever
 There as here !"—and
 that is his last legacy of optimistic cheer to man-
 kind—surely a message very high and inspiring !

We also know how Browning's thought of the necessary incompleteness of man led him also to impose a correlative incompleteness on God, the Almighty, though he asserted the even greater conceptions some times. The former, as Mr. G. K. Chesterton in his *Life of Browning* points out—
 "if man has self-sacrifice and God has none, then man has in the universe a secret and blasphemous superiority," and so much did the importance of this thought of man's incompleteness weigh with Browning that he had therefore to take up the conception of the crucified Christ, God laying his own life down for the redeeming of man—how necessary an idea that ! At least to Robert Browning, here, who always prized the onward waging struggle for truth and light more than the truth realised as One and humanly colourless, to him an abstract ideal, is not fit for man to strive for and attain unto,—the idea which has found expression in his "Numpholeptos" included in "Pacchiarotto and other Poems of 1876. Why? if man is incomplete, so should God be, although man finds his accomplishment in God but who knows if there is not progress still evermore and we say "amen," there is progress and still ever more, only perhaps—and this may be only a conjecture on our part, after all—Browning will not follow us consciously there. He would rather rest with Saul, where we find the poet's conception of the suffering God, "the Christ-Soul on earth,"

" 'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for ! my
 flesh that I seek
 In the godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul,
 it shall be
 A Face like my face that receives thee : a Man like
 to me
 Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever ! a
 Hand like this hand
 Shall 'throw open the gates of new life to thee !
 See the Christ stand ! "

So far so good !

Browning's optimism has been described elsewhere as an "ultimate and unshakable order that 'is founded upon the absolute sight and sound and smell and handling of things ;" where of course the word "absolute" has also to be interpreted in the light of his theological conception. "Existence" we repeat, was, according to Browning "justified because of its incompleteness." What-

ever his most advanced eschatology of things might be, he was apparently steadfast in his belief in life as a conscious, deliberate endeavour, through all kinds of sins or mistakes, checks and battlements to reach the city of Perfection, the haven of all our crosses and trials, beyond the high seas of life. To him the mistakes that men commit in their lives were of infinite moment being fraught with very great consequences towards the real self-realisation of man, as he understood it.

With this, latterly, we shall have to combine once more his emphasis on the importance of the "moment" in our lives. The minute little point of time which contains within it the germ of the infinite—surely, Browning is inconsistent in his avowed ideas of time and space and imaginative actualisation of the truth regarding them—expansion of the soul:—Should we not all live for it, hope for it, hold by it, so we rise to our own height for once at least, even if it be to lose it again, the loss making us the gainers for it, for we would thereby gain the true vision of our high destiny, when we shall glide from out this cribbed, crabbed and confined existence of ours and only cross out a step or two of dubious twilight, to come out on the other side, where there are novel silent silver lights and darks undreamed of, where we should all hush and bless ourselves with silence. That is, where we enter into the soul-side of our human worldly loves, in the supreme moments of our lives. Verily, here is a conception which is much more akin to Bergson's intuitive insight rather than to the Hegelian conception of a dialectical teleological movement in the universe, where the synthesis is arrived at by a mere logical process of commingling between the thesis and anti-thesis.

No, Browning's supreme distinction lies in his "vision" of self-exceeding; not the individual marching along with the world for a dim, hazy, self-realisation, in the far, far distance, as Tennyson would have it, but the incorporation in us of the ideal and an ever-ready and active mood "not by discounting life as fools do here, paid by instalment, but like the grammarian himself to warn others not to prate of most or least, painful or easy!" for, as he said:—

"Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
Ay, nor feel queasy!"

(A Grammarian's funeral).

Thus we reached in Browning almost the very highest that his soul was capable of giving us. And all this time we have been shirking the ostensible weak places in his optimism. A poet is never or at least should not be judged according to the lines whereby we judge a theologian or a philosopher. His is not a closely reasoned out system, and however much some may have tried to reduce the thoughts of Browning into a system, we must observe that the personality of the true poet stands above it all. The poet brings out his intuitions before the whole world and with a gradual accretion of strength to his pinions he soars yet higher and higher where we common men can hardly dare look at him. There are his most exalted moments which we are much apt to forget as much as the poet himself, who because of this deficiency has to go down to posterity clad more with his imperfections than otherwise. Browning has, in some places—his "Paracelsus," and "Fifine at the Fair," for example—has given expression to that other characteristic of the human mind which cannot so easily immure itself within a mere glorious hope for the future in heaven or upon this earth even for the matter of that. Where, it asks, is the gurrantee of my gaining the truth in future, if in the real, moving, vital present the truth escapes us so consistently and so systematically. That is the exact problem where Browning stays back—though back he will urge he goes never, his hopes supplying him the necessary impetus to a farther and farther realisation—for he did not quite fully divine the full significance of the barriers of time and space, except perhaps in a dull, sub-conscious manner.

Not that, according to him man should allow himself to be "seduced by temptations of sense, denying the light that is in him" and blindly yielding to a shrewd and worldly wise policy, thus committing himself in open rebellion to his "spiritual, his infinite life and its concerns" but that he should beware how he dares to overleap the bounds of time, this earthly and terrestrial life and try to accomplish under all the restrictions of his life, the work of eternity, "the deploying of our total power and "thrusting in time eternity's concern"; which if he does he is bound to go and dash himself into pieces against the walls of time and space, seeing that his objects are un-

attainable.' Abt vogler failed through this and so did Paracelsus and Aprile and Sordello and from their failures came their due punishments and rewards. When disappointment overtook their hearts then it was that the light of truth dawned on them and reclaimed them from their ways, to the salvation of their souls. As he makes St. John say, in "A death in the desert" that God's gift was that man should conceive of truth and yearn to gain, catching at mistake; the ultimate truth can never be his; he can have premonitions, insights, intuitions but still he is only breaking and building, changing what was wrought. It is God only who makes the "live shape at a jet" and that consummation he is to wait for fulfilment in another sphere. And true to his instinct of optimism, Browning cannot stand the idea of intermediate lives for man's accession unto the supreme truth. For why? he should say, is not this life of ours enough? He cries out in a half-suspicious manner:

"Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that good is best,
And through earth and its noise, what is
heaven's serene,—
When its faith in the same has stood the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done.
There remained a rest for the people of God,
And I have had troubles enough for me.
(Old pictures in Florence)

To the man, who has set his heart on gaining the utmost of all knowledge, not a summation of it, but the essence of it all, Paracelsus-like to taste the forbidden fruit of Robert Browning, has he really any hope to educe from a Browningite conception of life? The answer is both yes and no. He can take the propulsion to life, his half-muttered, half-spoken-aloud truths of the ultimate kind, he can take his sense and indications, his suggestions and half-revelations and then dive down deep in his own self, yes, for the Absolute itself in spite of him but not this time Paracelsus-like with an evident weak spot in his character, a bar in his escutcheon. And is that possible? With the vision of the One beyond time and space still tracing its course on through the history of hundreds of years, with added strength and lustre thrown upon it by the successive generation of

saints can India, standing where she does, deny the sight and sense thereof? The vision of those ancients penetrated even deeper into the problems of life whence arose both the elixir and the transfiguration thereof at once giving a far higher exaltation of the perceptions, feelings thought and actions of which life consists and embodying a far deeper and stronger realisation of the problems of humanity in words that glow and burn diamond-like through the century-old darkness of our earthly life. The fetish of the time and space conception of the modern mind has no influence on the psychology of men of their stamp, hence the thoroughness and the complete "other-worldliness" of their vision which the modern world stands so urgently in need of to-day.

Pessimism, which is only a break-down of the common worldly kind,—not a total rupture and a new incision made from the established rut of things,—conjugal love, or earthly ambition, learning or beliefs of the semitic realistic type when in jeopardy will surely find their account in poems like Browning's and be exalted and refined in the light that the author chooses to throw on them and there meet their conservative doom; for it must be said that Browning also is a "conservative" only at a further remove from Tennyson, when the former made it a point with him to start wildly at the man who would dare to remove earth's encrustations and peep beyond this life and the world. The pessimism of the adventurer who has found that after all, the symbols themselves seduce us from the realisation of a truer Truth that in an ultimate analysis, beauty and love and hope slip away through the fingers and only the higher essence of them remains; things which all fade away irrevocably, is, strong in its conviction that all that a poet with an eminently "realistic" conception of a God who is the fulfiller and restorer of them all in another trans-mundane sphere may urge on his own behalf will not serve to recall and reinstate them in the one particular form in which it wishes to retain all things. And if this pessimism reaches down into the very core of things, it will not be satisfied with anything short of an immediate consciousness of their right existence and its truth and joy, Sat, Chit, Ananda, yea, in this very existence of ours bound up as it is with the barriers of time and its associates. For

the conception will be in time but not of time—it is the conception of Brownings "moment" theory elevated and elaborated into the true thing that it is. The battle-songs of the man who will fight for this will be composed a little in a different strain from those of ours and he is sure to leave, not that he is made to leave, but leave of his own accord. "For Beauty, Beauty's rarest flower; for Truth, the lips that never deceive, and for Love, love's haunted bowers," to merge into the infinite unknown. And the "enunciation of the fundamental perfection within—not without—all things" is surely one of the very first postulates that a spirit of this type will have to proceed upon. As in Tagore, (quoted by J. H. Cousins) "only in the deepest silence of night the stars smile and whisper among themselves—"vain is this seeking! unbroken perfection is over all!"

But this in no sense should be understood to decry or even to find out actual flaws in the message of hope which is so characteristically Brownings own. We have only seen that he cannot

satisfy men of one very certain peculiar temperament. Browning has and yet will have many hearers both in the east and west when he sings of our hopes remaining vital and completed in a subtler and more transcendent form, in the end, as suddenly, the worst will turn the best to the bravest and the black minute of painful dissociation from our physical bodies is over and we meet with our fulfilment of love and joy, clasping them at our heart and with God leaving the rest.

He will always remain a tower of strength on our side in his invitation to us to be up and on our legs, for Truth beacons ahead, in spite of the inherent weak places in his gospel viewed as a whole. His glorious legacy to his posterity—the call to march

"From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
From what seemed good, to what now proves best,
How could man have progression otherwise?"

is surely, a thing we can lay to our heart and let it burn in our minds and then see for ourselves where it leads us on to.

DAYAMAYA MITRA, M. A.

EPISTLES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(Translated from Bengali.)

CLII.

1895.

* * Your suggestion to me to go back to India is no doubt right, but a seed has been sown in this country, and there is the possibility of its being nipped in the bud if I go away all on a sudden. Hence I have to wait sometime. Moreover it will be possible to manage everything nicely from here. Everybody requests to me to return to India. It is all right, but don't you see it is not wise to depend upon others. A wise man should stand firm on his own legs and act. Everything will come about, slowly. For the present don't forget to be on the look out for a site. We want a big plot,—of about ten to twenty thousand rupees,—it must be right on the Ganges. Though my capital is small, I am exceedingly bold. Have an eye

on securing the land. At present we shall have to work three centres, one in New York, another in Calcutta and a third in Madras. Then, by degrees, as the Lord will arrange.

* * You must keep a strict eye on health, let everything else be subordinated to that. * *

— is eager for travel, well, it is good, but these are very expensive countries; a preacher needs here at least a thousand rupees a month. But — has boldness, and it is God who provides everything. Quite true, but he must have to improve his English a little. The thing is, one must have to snatch his bread from the jaws of the missionary scholars. That is, one must snub these people by dint of learning, or he will be blown off at a puff. They understand neither Sadhus nor your Sannyasins, nor the

spirit of renunciation. What they do understand is the vastness of learning, the display of eloquence and tremendous activity. Over and above that, the whole country will be searching for flaws, the clergy will day and night try to snub you, through force or guile. You must get rid of these obstructions to preach your doctrines. Through the mercy of the Divine Mother everything is possible. But in my opinion if — goes on starting some societies in the Punjab and Madras, and you become organised, it will be the best thing. It is indeed a great thing to discover a new path, but it is as difficult a task to cleanse that path and make it spacious and nice. If you live for some time in places where I have sown the seeds of our Master's ideals, and succeed in developing the seeds into plants, you will be doing much greater work than I did. What will they who cannot manage some ready-made thing, do with regard to things that are yet to come? If you cannot add a little salt to a dish almost done, how am I to believe that you will collect all the ingredients? Let —, as an alternative, start an Himalayan Math at

Almora, and have a library there, so that we may spend some of our spare time in a cool place, and practise spiritual exercises. However, I have nothing to say against any particular course which any one may be led to adopt; on the contrary, god-speed—*शिवार्थः सन्तु पन्थानः*—“May your journey be prosperous.” Tell him to wait a bit. What's the good of being in a hurry? You shall all travel the whole world,—courage! — has a great capacity for work within him. Hence I expect much of him. * * You remember, I suppose, how after Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, all forsook us as so many worthless, ragged boys. Only people like — were our friends at that hour of need. And we shall never be able to repay our debts to them. * * Tell — in private that he has nothing to fear, that those who are protected by the Lord must be above fear. I am a puny man, but the glories of the Lord are infinite *शमैः शमैः*—discard fear. Let not your faith be shaken. * * Has danger any power over one whom the Lord has taken into His fold?

Ever yours

Vivekananda.

WHY I BECAME A HINDU AND SOME OF MY INDIAN EXPERIENCES*

I HAVE been asked to tell you something about my Indian experiences. The request seems simple enough; but when I thought over the matter I found that it was not so easy to put these experiences before others. In the first place you must remember that the impressions of a foreign country must be fresh and vivid to be properly expressed. I have lived among you for so many years and I regard India and her people so much as my own, that I can no longer regard you from the standpoint of a stranger. A foreigner makes comparisons and criticises, he stands apart and observes. And even though he mixes freely with the people and moves among them as a

participant, it is always more or less as a witness. Externally one may adopt all the ways and customs of a people and still internally remain a perfect stranger. You know how often this has been the case even with well-meaning persons. I need point only towards the great majority of Christian missionaries. To become really united with a foreign people requires not only love and sympathy and admiration, but also the capacity to forget and break with the past; to begin life as it were all anew. And even then the amalgamation is a slow process. It must be a growth from within, a transformation, an assimilation of that for which the country and the people stand. One must probe and find and fully accept the soul, the life-throb, the ideals, of a people, should one ever hope to really become one of them.

* Paper read before the Vivekananda Society at Calcutta, by Brahmanabhi Gururao.

You all know that the pulse-beat of India is her religion. And unless religion becomes one's highest good, one's main object in life, one's supreme aim and desire, no matter how much we may love and admire India in other directions, we will always remain foreigners, we will never become one of her children, we will never feel that that all distinction has slipped away,—that we have become Hindus among Hindus. To become a Hindu is a process that cannot be forced through external means, it is a natural growth, it is a change in the mental make-up.

But when that stage has been reached, then all distinction falls away. There is then no more criticising, no more making of comparisons, no more the attitude of the witness. That stage is then passed and left behind. Life becomes then a natural flow, the foreign country has become one's own country; one becomes then identified with Indian life and the difference between India and other countries is no longer an object of special notice.

My first acquaintance with India was through her religion and that has always remained my main point of contact. And therefore there was never much stock-taking in other directions. All else fell into the back-ground. India's religion is my religion and therefore India has become my own and your experiences are my experiences. Our experiences are in common and therefore I do not find it so easy to point out to you what exactly my Indian experiences are.

And there is something else that I would ask you to remember. And that is that my real Indian experiences began long before I came to India. These experiences are of a deep and sacred nature and they are of far greater importance than what one sees and learns by simply visiting a foreign land.

I remember how many years ago, in the West, I complained to one of our Swamis, that, though we had lived together so long, I still knew so little about India. And what was the Swami's reply? "My boy," he said, "I have given you the best that India has to give." How significant and true was the answer. For had he not initiated me into the deepest mysteries of your religion? Had he not made me a Hindu even while living in the

West? What greater thing has India to give to the world than her Eternal religion? What other country has any gift to offer that can be compared with the priceless gift of India,—her religion?

If my Indian experiences should mean only what I have seen and met with in this country, then these experiences would be superficial. Indian experiences should be deeper than that, they should relate to one's soul, they must be soul-experiences to be of any real value.

Indian experiences are unique. They are the experiences of Rishis and Sages, experiences after which every human heart should hanker. Therefore India stands supreme among the nations of the world, because she holds a treasure, a gift to humanity which no other nation has to offer. Other nations may possess wealth, they may enjoy greater worldly prosperity, but India holds the bread of life, the spiritual truth, without which, it seems, no nation can long withstand the onslaught of time. India possesses something that lies beyond the phenomenal, something that the senses cannot bring to our notice, something that lies deep hidden in the human heart. And when one comes in contact with that, then one becomes a true Hindu and one's love for India goes deeper even than the love of the country and her people. One has then come in contact with the soul of India, the Reality behind what the senses report. To be or become a true child of India one has to accept the religion of her people, one has to become a Hindu in religion. Heart must speak to heart, soul must touch soul. Then and then alone there is true union that brings genuine love and sympathy and understanding. For there is no stronger bond than the bond of religion.

It is for this reason that so many live and work among us, men and women of noble character, full of good will and self-sacrifice, who notwithstanding their best intentions, remain foreigners, sisters and brothers with foreign aims, with foreign ambitions. They have not understood what India stands for, they do not touch the heart, the soul of the people. And therefore their exertions do not always lead to the highest good.

To be a true Hindu it is not necessary to adopt all the ways and customs of the country; it is not necessary that one should dress in *chador* and

dheeti; it is not necessary even to live on Indian soil. To be a true Hindu one must be the spiritual child of the Indian Rishis and sages, one must drink in their words with thirstiness, one must sit at their feet and learn. And having learned one must attempt to follow their holy examples, to follow in their footsteps. Then we are true Hindus, brothers and sisters with one common aim. And what is that aim? To work out one's own salvation and at the same time to live for the good of all.

And then external differences count for little. Colour of skin, little differences in mode of living, even the difference of language, all these will be forgotten. The barrier is lifted, for soul speaks then to soul, the heart beats in unison with the heart-throb of this great nation.

That this is possible, we can not deny. I need mention only one example, a name, known and honoured and loved by you all, I mean the late Sister Nivedita. In her life we have seen the example of what I have tried to make clear in so many words.

But do not misunderstand me. When I say that we must adopt the religion of the country to be true Hindus, I do not say so in a sectarian sense. The Hindu religion is the broadest, the most liberal of all religions. It is the mother-religion from which all other religions are born. For the essence of all religions can be traced to that one common source, the scriptures of the Hindus, the oldest religious scriptures in the world.

That I do not take Hinduism or Vedanta in a sectarian sense I shall now try to make clear. I will do so by taking up a question that is put to me every now and then both in India and when I was in the West. The question is this: Why have you adopted Hinduism as your religion? Is not Christianity a good religion? Does it not lead to the highest goal? Does it not bring salvation to its true votaries? If so, why then did you renounce the religion in which you were born, the religion of your native land, the religion in which you have been raised and trained? Besides,—so they said in the West,—see what Christianity has done for us. Compare the social and material conditions in Christian countries with the conditions of the land where Vedanta took its birth and

where it is the national religion to-day. Certainly if we look at the poverty of India and compare it with our prosperity in the West, we cannot but conclude that Christianity is a boon to humanity and we need not go to other lands or religions to improve our conditions.

The last part of this argument is easily met, for I would reply that the prosperity of the West is a development quite apart from her religion. Jesus did not come to earth to teach man how to build up a rich and prosperous society. He came to teach the great lesson of all religions, namely, how to get rid of sin, of greed and lust and hatred and oppression, how to live in the world and not to be of the world. He came to cleanse society of low and degrading conditions, to make man pure and holy. And above all he taught renunciation. "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Observe Western society! Where is that meekness, that lowliness of heart which Jesus spoke of? Where is that rest in the soul that Jesus taught? I assure you, there is more of this in India to-day than in any Western country I have ever visited.

"Verily I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather unto barns. Yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they?"

Is this the gospel of health, wealth and prosperity?—the gospel of so-called Christian countries to-day! No, the prosperity of the West is not due to her love for Christ and obedience to his commands; it is the outcome of human ambition, of struggle for wealth and comfort. And but too often has this been done at the expense of all that is highest and noblest in man. Nay, to bring up the prosperity of the West as an argument in favor of Christianity must always fall flat on the ears of the Hindu. And thank God that it is so. Nay, the children of Sri Krishna, of Buddha, of Sankaracharya, of Lord Chaitanya, of Ramakrishna, of Vivekananda, are not so easily deceived. Neither will the true children of Christ be thus deceived.

And as regards myself, I would say that I have not adopted Vedanta to improve my material conditions. It was to improve my spiritual welfare that I took refuge in the Vedic teachings, that I sat at the feet of Hindu teachers.

But let us look now at the first part of the question. If true Christianity leads the sincere devotee to the highest spiritual goal, why then have I renounced Christianity to become a Hindu? This is a rather pointed question especially to those who profess to be the followers of Sri Ramakrishna and the Swami Vivekananda. For was it not one of Sri Ramakrishna's great gifts to humanity that he demonstrated in his own life and that he taught to others that all religions when sincerely followed lead to the same goal? And did not the Swami Vivekananda say in his American addresses: "I have not come to make you Hindus. I have to make you better Christians."

What then am I to answer to the question: why I gave up Christianity and adopted Hinduism? The answer in my case is really very simple. I did not renounce Christianity for the simple reason that I never was a Christian. Though born in a Christian country, I never accepted Christianity as my religion. I never joined any church or religious denomination. I did not accept religion in any form until I came in contact with Eastern thought. It was only through the glad tidings of the Vedanta, when these came to me through the blessed words of the Swami Vivekananda, that I took to the religious life. Christianity had left me stranded; I was like a boat without rudder, hopelessly drifting hither and thither, not able to find a place to anchor. I sought but found no resting place; my doubts were not solved. Religion was to me a maze in which I had lost my way. The churches, the preachers, could not satisfy me. I did not know which way to turn. And it was then that Vedanta came to my rescue. Here for the first time I found my doubts solved, my heart was filled with hope. And when I came in contact with the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission in the West, the path was made straight and I knew that the goal could be reached and that henceforth everything depended on my own sincerity of purpose.

Therefore, never having accepted Christianity,

there was nothing for me to reject, nothing to give up in that direction. It was only after I became a Hindu that I could accept and understand the teachings of Christ. But that is no reason that I should turn around now and become a Christian. For beautiful and life-giving as are the teachings of Christ there is nothing in his teachings that we do not find in the Vedanta. And now as a Hindu I realise that the great value of Vedanta lies in the fact that it reconciles all religions. It breaks down all barriers of sectarianism and dogmas and it establishes absolute freedom of thought. Had I been a Christian to start with I would have probably accepted Christ as my chosen ideal, I would have tried to find my inspiration from the Bible. But as it was, it was but natural that my heart went out in the direction from which I had received my first inspiration. But as a Vedantist I can have no quarrel with true Christianity as Christ taught it.

When the Swami Vivekananda came to the West, people thought that he had come to start a new religious sect. He was interviewed by the representatives of most of the leading journals. And to these men he had to give out what he and his message stood for. The Swami then told them distinctly that sects are founded on non-essentials. The essential part of all religions is very much the same; all religions are different expressions of the same truth as suited to different minds; Vedanta is the kernel of all religions; leaving aside non-essentials, it lays stress on that which is the basis of religion.

From this it follows that Vedanta does not ask any one to give up his own religion. When one becomes a Vedantin he need not cease to be a Christian. One may remain a Christian and study the Vedanta in the hope that by doing so, new light may be thrown on his own religion. In other words, that by doing so he may become a better Christian.

(To be continued.)



VIVEKACHUDAMANI

(Continued from page 141.)

संसारकागमृत्तमोक्षमिच्छो-
रयोमयं पादनियन्धशृङ्खलम् ।

यदन्ति तज्ज्ञाः पटु वासनात्रयं

योऽस्माद्विमुक्तः समुपैति मुक्तिम् ॥२७२॥

272. For one who seeks deliverance from the poison of this world (Samsara), those three desires have been designated by the wise as the strong iron fetters to shackle one's feet. He who is free from them truly attains to Liberation.

जलादिसंसर्गवशात्प्रभूत-

दुर्गन्धधूताऽगरदिव्यवासना ।

संघर्षणैव धिभाति सम्यग्

विधूयमाने सति बाह्यगन्धे ॥२७३॥

273. The lovely odour of the Agaru (agallochum) which is hidden by a powerful stench due to its contact with water etc., (again) manifests itself when the foreign smell has been fully removed by mere rubbing.

अन्तःस्थितानन्तदुरन्तवासना-

धूलीविलिप्ता परमात्मवासना ।

प्रज्ञातिसंघर्षणतो विशुद्धा

प्रतीयते चन्दनगन्धवत् स्फुटम् ॥२७४॥

274. Like the fragrance of the sandal-wood, the perfume of the Supreme Self, which is covered with the dust of endless, virulent desires imbedded in the mind, when purified by the constant friction of Knowledge, is (again) clearly perceived.

[Sandalwood—the 'Agaru' of the previous Sloka is meant.]

Manant in Sanskrit means both 'odour' and desire.

अनात्मवासनाजालेस्तिरोभूतात्मवासना ।

नित्यात्मनिष्ठया तेषां नाशे भाति स्वयं स्फुटम् ॥२७५॥

275. The desire for Self-realisation is obscured by the countless desires for things other than the Self. When they have been destroyed by the constant attachment for the Self, the Atman clearly manifests Itself of Its own accord.

यथा यथा प्रत्यगवस्थितं मन-

स्तथा तथा मुञ्चति बाह्यवासनाम् ।

निःशेषमोक्षे सति वासनाना-

मात्मानुभूतिः प्रतिबन्धशून्या ॥२७६॥

276. As the mind becomes gradually established in the Inmost Self, it proportionately gives up the desires for external objects. And when all such desires have been eliminated, there takes place the unobstructed Realisation of the Atman.

स्वात्मन्येव सदा स्थित्वा मनो नश्यति योगिनः ।

वासनानां क्षयश्चातः स्वाध्यासापनयं कुरु ॥२७७॥

277. The Yogi's mind dies, being constantly fixed on his own (Real) Self. Thence follows the cessation of desires. Therefore do away with thy superimposition.

तमो द्वाभ्यां रजः सत्त्वात्सत्त्वं शुद्धेन नश्यति ।

तस्मात्सत्त्वमवष्टभ्य स्वाध्यासापनयं कुरु ॥२७८॥

278. Tamas is destroyed by both Sattva and Rajas, Rajas by Sattva, and Sattva dies when purified. Therefore do away with thy superimposition, through the help of Sattva.

प्रारब्धं पुष्यति वपुरिति निश्चित्य निश्चलः ।

धौर्ध्र्यमालम्ब्य यत्नेन स्वाध्यासापनयं कुरु ॥२७९॥

279. Knowing for certain that the Prarabdh work will maintain this body, remain quiet and do away with thy superimposition carefully and with fortitude.

[*Prarabdha*—the resultant of past Karma that has led to the present birth. When this is worked out, the body falls, and *Videhamukti* is the result.]

नाहं जीवः परंब्रह्मेत्यतद्व्यावृत्तिपूर्वकम् ।

वासनावेगतः प्राप्तस्वाध्यासापनयं कुरु ॥२८०॥

280. "I am not the individual soul, but the Supreme Brahman,"—eliminating thus all that is not-Self, do away with thy superimposition, which has come through the momentum of (past) desires.

श्रुत्या युक्त्या स्वानुभूत्या ज्ञात्वा सार्वआत्म्यमात्मनः
क्वचिदाभासतः प्राप्तस्वाध्यासापनयं कुरु ॥२८१॥

281. Realising thyself as the Self of all by means of Scripture, reasoning and thy own Realisation, do away with thy superimposition, even when a trace of it seems to appear.

अनादानविसर्गाभ्यामीषन्नास्ति क्रिया मुनेः ।

तदेकनिष्ठया नित्यं स्वाध्यासापनयं कुरु ॥२८२॥

282. The sage has no connection whatever with action, as he has no idea of accepting or giving up. Therefore, through constant engrossment on the Brahman alone, do away with thy superimposition.

तत्त्वमस्यादिवाक्योत्पन्नह्यात्मैकत्वबोधतः ।

ब्रह्मण्ययात्मत्वदाढ्याय स्वाध्यासापनयं कुरु ॥२८३॥

283. Through the realisation of the identity of Brahman and the soul, resulting from such great dicta as 'Thou art That' and so forth, do away with thy superimposition, with a view to strengthen thy identification with Brahman.

अहंभावस्य देहेऽस्मिन्निशेषविलयावधि ।

सावधानेन युक्तात्मा स्वाध्यासापनयं कुरु ॥२८४॥

284. Until the identification with this body is completely rooted out, do away with thy superimposition with watchfulness and concentrated mind.

प्रतीतिर्जीवजगतोः स्वप्नवद्भाति यावता ।

तावन्निरन्तरं विद्वन्स्वाध्यासापनयं कुरु ॥२८५॥

285. So long as even a dream-like perception of the universe and souls persists, do away with thy superimposition, O learned one, without the least break.

[*The universe and souls*—i. e. plurality.]

निद्राया लोकवार्त्तायाः शब्दादरपि विस्मृतः ।

क्वचिन्नावसरं दत्वा चिन्तयात्मानमात्मनि ॥२८६॥

286. Without giving the slightest chance to oblivion on account of sleep, concern in secular matters or the sense-objects, reflect on the Self in thy mind,

मातापित्रोर्मलोद्भूतं मलमांसमयं वपुः ।

त्यक्त्वा चण्डालवद्दूरं ब्रह्मीभूय कृती भव ॥२८७॥

287. Shunning from a safe distance the the body, which has come from parents and itself consists of flesh and impurities,—as one does an outcast,—be thou Brahman and realise the consummation of thy life.

[*Shunning*—i. e. giving up all identification of the body which is very impure.]

घटाकाशं महाकाशं इवात्मानं परात्मनि ।

विलाप्याखण्डभावेन तूष्णीं भव सदा मुने ॥२८८॥

288. Merging the finite soul in the Supreme Self, like the space enclosed by a jar in the infinite space, by means of meditation on their identity, always keep quiet, O sage.

स्वप्रकाशमधिष्ठानं स्वयंभूय सदात्मना ।

ब्रह्माण्डमपि पिण्डाण्डं त्यज्यतां मलभागडवत् ॥

289. Becoming thyself the self-effulgent Brahman, the substratum of all phenomena,—as that Reality, give up both the macrocosm and the microcosm, like two filthy receptacles.

[*Give up.....microcosm*—ceasing to care for the whole universe, which is other than the Self, and which pales into insignificance before the majesty of the Self.]

चिदात्मनि सदानन्दे देहाकूटमहंभियम् ।

निवेश्य लिङ्गमुत्सृज्य केवलो भव सर्वदा ॥२९०॥

290. Transferring the identification now rooted in the body, to the Atman, the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, and discarding the subtle body, be thou ever alone, independent.

[Discarding—ceasing to identify oneself with.]

यत्रैष जगदाभासो दर्पशान्तः पुरं यथा ।

तद्ब्रह्माहमिति ज्ञात्वा कृतकृत्यो भविष्यसि ॥२६१॥

291. That in which there is this reflection of the universe, as a city is reflected in a mirror,—that Brahman am I;—knowing this thou wilt attain the consummation of thy life.

यत्सत्यभूतं निजरूपमाद्यं

चिदहंयानन्दमरूपमक्रियम् ।

तदेत्यभिधाय पुरुषं त्वजं

शैलरूपवद्वेषमुपात्तमात्मनः ॥२६२॥

299. That which is real and thy own primeval Essence, that Knowledge, and Bliss Absolute, the One without a second, which is beyond form and activity—attaining That one should cease to identify oneself with one's false bodies, like an actor giving up his assumed mask.

[False bodies—the gross, subtle and casual bodies, which are superimpositions upon the Atman.

Like an actor etc.—When the actor has played his part, he is simply a man. So the man of reali-

sation is one with Brahman, his real Essence.]

सर्वात्मना दृश्यमिदं सृष्टैव

नैवाहमर्थः क्षणिकत्वदर्शनात् ।

जानाम्यहं सर्वमिति प्रतीतिः

कुतोऽहमादेः क्षणिकस्य सिध्येत् ॥२६३॥

293. This objective universe is absolutely unreal; neither is Egoism a reality, for it is observed to be momentary. How can the perception that I know all, be true of Egoism etc. which are momentary?

[The perception.....all—Man's inherent belief in the omniscience of the Atman is meant.]

अहंपदार्थस्त्वहमादिसाक्षी

नित्यं सुषुप्तावपि भावदर्शनात् ।

द्रुते ह्यजो नित्य इति श्रुतिः स्वयं

तत्प्रत्यगात्मा सदसद्विलक्षणः ॥२६४॥

294. But the real 'I' is that which witnesses the Ego and the rest. It exists always, even in the state of profound sleep. The Sruti herself says, "It is birthless, eternal" etc. Therefore the Paramatman is different from the gross and subtle bodies.

[Exists always.....sleep—as the witness of all experience.

The Sruti &c.—The reference is to the Katha Upanishad, I. ii. 18.]

(To be continued).

REVIEWS AND REPORTS.

The King's Wife. By James H. Cousins. Pp 95.

Size 5 by 7 in. Published by Ganesh & Co., Madras.

A short drama based on the story of Akbar's coming in disguise to visit the greatest of women saints and singers—Mira Bai. The author says in the foreword, "Akbar and Mira are separated by a century. . . The author hopes that the presentation of three types of religious expression, the spiritual adventure and breadth of Akbar the simple devotion of Mira, the inquisitorial fanaticism of Kumba (the Rajput prince represented as the husband of Mira) which are contemporaneous

in all lands and ages, may be the evocation of some measure of æsthetic joy, provide compensation for historical discrepancy." The types of character are vividly drawn especially that of Mira, with her heart completely given to the Lord of Brindaban, and her mind floating in the thought-world of the Brindaban within the Heart, ready to drift away from her earthly moorings. The finish of the drama is of tragic intensity, quite in keeping with Mira's loftiness of vision, for even in death when the call came, "to do the king's wish," she ran out to meet the footsteps of the Lord of Brindaban.

We have received the 7th part of Marathi translation of the Life of Swami Vivekananda, edited by Mr. Ramchandra Narayan Mandlik. The get-up of the book is good. We are not ourselves proficient in Mahratti language, but from a cursory glancing through the pages with the help of a friend acquainted with Marathi, we find that in some places the translations are not correct and happy. For example, taking from the quotation prefixed to the volume, we find, "I recommend you to struggle" the word struggle is translated in Marathi by the word भगडगुचे which according to Marathi dictionary means "quarrel." This is very unhappy, the Swami here was simply referring to the manifestation of Rajas or activity as a cure for the inertia of the people. In another place, "the whirlwind of spiritual rhapsody and ecstasy that had swept over the souls of devotees in Dakshineswar on the banks of the Ganges swept here anew the souls of other devotees in the island retreat of the beautiful St. Lawrence river," is translated, "the devotees of the Paramahansa were seen there—in the Math on the bank of the Ganges—with their body-consciousness lost in the absorption of supreme bliss, gabbling what appeared to the worldly view as an incoherent prattle, so also, in these days, the disciples of the Swami could be found gabbling in the bungalow of Miss D. on the banks of the St. Lawrence river." If gabbling incoherently is meant to convey the spirit of rhapsody and ecstasy we confess it is very unhappy. In the prefixed quotation to Part V. 'No great work can be done without sacrifice' in translation, to work is added an adjectival clause 'whether religious and national' which is gratuitous as it is not in the original. We recommend to the editor to keep closely to the original as much as possible, and to convey the sense of the original by words themselves, with as little explanatory clauses as possible.

We have received the following report of the progress of Famine Relief work in Bengal and Behar, undertaken by the Ramkrishna Mission:—From January last to May we have been distributing rice and cloth altogether among 3765 recipients in 156 villages in the following areas, (i) Manbhum—Bagda, (ii) Bankura—Indpur, (iii) Bankura—Koalpara, (iv) Tippera—Brahmanbaria, (v) Santal Parganas—Kunda. In the meantime

two more centres, one at Koniamara in the district of Bankura and the other at Sarwan in that district of Santal-Parganas (near Madhupur) have been opened, the report whereof has not yet reached us. The Fire Relief Work at Bhubaneswar in the district of Puri is still going on. The re-excavation of a tank and the sinking of three wells, as said before, have by this time been completed. For want of money we are not in a position to extend our scope of work according to demands. We are receiving appeals for relief of distress due to want of cloth from one area and another. But to meet this want is an enormous task, while only to close successfully the work which we have started in our small area Rupees Twelve thousands more will be required. So we hope for an immediate response from the generous public in cash or in kind to our appeals. Contributions should be sent to the following addresses:—(1) The President, Belur Math, Howrah, (2) Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission, 1 Mukherji's Lane, Bagbazar, Calcutta.

The Eighth Annual Report of the Ramkrishna Mission Sevashrama, Muthigunge, Allahabad, from January to December, 1918:—During the year under review 12,218 sick poor were treated in the outdoor Dispensary, of which 6,287 were new cases. Of the latter 5,650 were Hindus, 566 Mahomedans, 42 Christians and 29 belonged to other denominations. The actual receipts of the Mission during the year came to Rs. 1328-13-3 and the expenses amounted to the total of Rs. 1245-5-8. Owing to the fact that the income of the Ashrama fell off, sufficient quantity of medicines could not be procured.

Since the remotest times Allahabad has been one of the holiest places of pilgrimage in India where pilgrims from every part congregate on all occasions. Being also the capital of the United Provinces, people from every district flock here to gain their livelihood either through work or charity. The city has been growing more and more in importance every year, both as regards population and commerce. With the advance in population, disease and suffering are also on the increase, and an indoor hospital for the diseased poor has become an urgent necessity in addition to what is already provided by the Government.

The Mission appeals to all in the name of the sick and homeless poor of Allahabad to provide for them a shelter where they might be accommodated and treated. A hospital of six beds with a small surgery attached and a separate room for infectious cases might serve for the present requirement. The Mission charitable dispensary is at present situated in a small plot of land of its own, purchased from the Allahabad Math. But it has not got as yet a separate quarter for the workers to live in. The house for the workers has become very necessary for the efficient working of the institution and is required to be built close to the outdoor dispensary within its own premises.

The Mission appeals to all kind souls, of all creeds and nationalities for relieving the diseased poor and for giving a permanent footing to the institution which is trying to serve poor humanity in its humble way. All amounts may be sent to—

(1) To Swami Vijnanananda, Ramkrishna Mission Sevashrama, Muthigunge, Allahabad, or (2) to the President, Ramkrishna Math, Belur, Dt. Howrah.

NEWS AND NOTES.

On 13th of June was laid the Foundation Stone of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama in Salem in the plot specially bought for the purpose in the Sivaswami-puram Extensions. His Holiness Swami Nirmalanandaji came for that purpose on his way back from his western tour. Right at the appointed time Swamiji came to the spot and invoking the Blessings of Sri Guru Maharaj after Puja and Arathi, declared the Foundation Stone truly and well laid. The Ashrama is to be built by public donations and it augurs well to know that many gentlemen of the town have come forward to help in the construction of the Ashrama. The site with the building will be handed over to the Mission. It is hoped that, true to its tradition, the Ashrama will bring solace and happiness to many a wearied traveller in this mundane existence.

As the first work of its activity in Salem the inimitable book of that Bhakta "M,"—The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna—has been translated in Tamil and the 1st part of the translation will be issued in

the course of a few weeks to commemorate the founding of the Ashrama at Salem.

SRIMAT Swami Sharvananda of Ramakrishna Mission, Madras, arrived at Port Swettenham on the 2nd inst. where he was received by the leading Hindu residents of Klang and Port Swettenham. The Swamiji and party then proceeded to Klang where a hearty reception was given by the Hindus of Klang at the Mariamman Temple. After spending some hours in Klang the Swamiji left by car accompanied by those who went to receive him and also some leading gentlemen. The party then proceeded and arrived at the Vivekananda Ashrama, Kuala Lumpur, sharp at 6-30 p. m. Here many hundreds of Hindus including children attended by two sets of musicians welcomed Swamiji who was then led to the Ashrama Hall and garlanded. A welcome address was read to which the Swami replied dwelling at length on our duty to religion and instructed that everyone should endeavour to bring about the unfoldment of the Atman.

The Swami Sharvananda has been preaching Vedanta and the message of Swami Vivekananda in the Malay and has delivered a course of lectures on Vedanta philosophy under the auspices of the Vivekananda Ashrama, Kuala Lumpur.

APPEAL.

WE have received from the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bharukatty, Barisal, an appeal for the famine-stricken people of the locality round about Bharukatty, a place 14 miles distant from the town of Barisal. The people of thirteen villages are keenly affected by the famine in the locality, and nearly a hundred families are keenly distressed. There have been, the appeal says, some cases of death from starvation and some even of suicide. The Sevashrama have opened a relief centre to mitigate the sufferings of the distressed and nearly three hundred men get help every week from the centre. It appeals to the generous public to help it with financial help so that it may carry on effectively its work of relieving the distressed population. Any help may be sent to following addresses and will be thankfully received and acknowledged by them in the papers: (1) Umesh Ch. Das Gupta, B.A., B.L., President. (2) Monoranjan Das Gupta, Secretary, Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Bharukaty, Barisal.